

CLAIMS:

1. A method for providing a call answering service between a source telephone and a target telephone having access to a voice mail system, said method comprising:

- (a) receiving an unanswered call directed to the target telephone, said call having embedded therein an address of the target telephone, an address of the source telephone, an address of the voice mail system, and an indication as to whether or not the target telephone is busy;
 - 5 (b) if the target telephone is not busy, establishing an outgoing call to the target telephone;
 - 10 (c) conveying to the source telephone a response generated by the voice mail system, said response having embedded media parameters identifying the voice mail system; and
 - 15 (d) in response to an accept call instruction received from the target telephone, terminating said response and bridging all media between the source telephone and the target telephone.
2. The method according to claim 1, further including:
- (e) responsive to termination of a voice message directed from the source telephone, directing a prompt to the source telephone to allow the source telephone to hear the voice message.
- 20 3. A method for providing a call answering service between a source telephone and a target telephone having access to a screening server, said method comprising:
- (a) receiving an unanswered call directed to the target telephone, said call having embedded therein an address of the target telephone, an address of the source telephone, and an address of the screening server;
 - 25 (b) establishing an outgoing call to the target telephone;
 - (c) establishing an outgoing call to a voice mail system and forwarding all call parameters that are needed by the voice mail system in order to process the call properly;
 - 30 (d) conveying to the source telephone a response generated by the voice mail system, said response having embedded media parameters identifying the screening server; and

- (e) in response to an accept call instruction received from the target telephone, terminating said response and re-establishing connection to both the source telephone and the target telephone.
4. A method for providing an enhanced call answering service between a source 5 telephone and a target telephone having access to a Value Added Service, said method comprising:
- (a) receiving an unanswered call directed to the target telephone;
- (b) establishing to the Value Added Service an outgoing call containing an address of the target telephone, an address of the source telephone, and an address of the Value Added Service or of an intermediary associated therewith;
- (c) establishing an outgoing call to the target telephone;
- (d) conveying to the source telephone a response generated by the Value 10 Added Service, said response having embedded media parameters identifying the Value Added Service or an intermediary associated therewith;
- (e) directing media received from the source telephone to the Value Added Service and directing media received from the Value Added Service or from an intermediary associated therewith to the source telephone;
- (f) upon the target telephone going off-hook, establishing a connection between the target telephone and the Value Added Service or the intermediary associated therewith so as to allow the target telephone to receive media conveyed from the source telephone to the Value Added Service or the intermediary associated therewith as well as media conveyed from the Value Added Service or the intermediary associated therewith to the source telephone; and
- (g) in response to an accept call instruction received from the target telephone, routing all media between the source telephone and the target telephone.
- 30 5. The method according to claim 4, wherein source telephone and the target telephone are VoIP telephones connected to the Value Added Service via said intermediary and there is further included:
- (h) in response to an accept call instruction received from the target telephone, disconnecting a connection to the Value Added Service.

6. The method according to claim 4, further including:

- (h) responsive to termination of a voice message directed from the source telephone, directing a prompt to the source telephone to allow the source telephone to hear the voice message; and
- 5 (i) in response to a request from the target telephone to communicate with the source telephone, disconnecting the Value Added Service and bridging between the source telephone and the target telephone.

7. The method according to claim 4, wherein the Value Added Service is a voice mail system.

10 8. A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for providing a call answering service between a source telephone and a target telephone having access to a voice mail system, said method comprising:

- (a) receiving an unanswered call directed to the target telephone, said call having embedded therein an address of the target telephone, an address of the source telephone, an address of the voice mail system, and an indication as to whether or not the target telephone is busy;
- 15 (b) if the target telephone is not busy, establishing an outgoing call to the target telephone;
- 20 (c) conveying to the source telephone a response generated by the voice mail system, said response having embedded media parameters identifying the voice mail system; and
- (d) in response to an accept call instruction received from the target telephone, terminating said response and bridging all media between the 25 source telephone and the target telephone.

9. A computer program product comprising a computer useable medium having computer readable program code embodied therein for providing a call answering service between a source telephone and a target telephone having access to a voice mail system, said computer program product comprising:

30 computer readable program code for causing the computer to receive an unanswered call directed to the target telephone, said call having embedded therein an address of the target telephone, an address of the source telephone, an address of the voice mail system, and an indication as to whether or not the target telephone is busy;

35 computer readable program code for causing the computer to establish an outgoing call to the target telephone if the target telephone is not busy;

computer readable program code for causing the computer to convey to the source telephone a response generated by the voice mail system, said response having embedded media parameters identifying the voice mail system; and

5 computer readable program code for causing the computer to terminate said response and bridge all media between the source telephone and the target telephone in response to an accept call instruction received from the target telephone.

10. 10. A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for providing a call answering service between a source telephone and a target telephone having access 10 to a screening server, said method comprising:

- (a) receiving an unanswered call directed to the target telephone, said call having embedded therein an address of the target telephone, an address of the source telephone, and an address of the screening server;
- 15 (b) establishing an outgoing call to the target telephone;
- (c) establishing an outgoing call to a voice mail system and forwarding all call parameters that are needed by the voice mail system in order to process the call properly;
- (d) conveying to the source telephone a response generated by the voice 20 mail system, said response having embedded media parameters identifying the screening server; and
- (e) in response to an accept call instruction received from the target telephone, terminating said response and re-establishing connection to both the source telephone and the target telephone.

25 11. 11. A computer program product comprising a computer useable medium having computer readable program code embodied therein for providing a call answering service between a source telephone and a target telephone having access to a screening server, said computer program product comprising:

30 computer readable program code for causing the computer to receive an unanswered call directed to the target telephone, said call having embedded therein an address of the target telephone, an address of the source telephone, and an address of the screening server;

computer readable program code for causing the computer to establish an outgoing call to the target telephone;

computer readable program code for causing the computer to establish an outgoing call to a voice mail system and forwarding all call parameters that are needed by the voice mail system in order to process the call properly;

5 computer readable program code for causing the computer to convey to the source telephone a response generated by the voice mail system, said response having embedded media parameters identifying the screening server; and

computer readable program code for causing the computer to terminate said response and re-establish connection to both the source telephone and the target telephone in response to an accept call instruction received from the target telephone.

10 12. A voice mail system for providing a call answering service between a source telephone and a target telephone having access to the voice mail system, said voice mail system being adapted to:

- (a) receive an unanswered call directed to the target telephone, said call having embedded therein an address of the target telephone, an address of the source telephone, an address of the voice mail system, and an indication as to whether or not the target telephone is busy;
- (b) establish an outgoing call to the target telephone if the target telephone is not busy;
- (c) convey to the source telephone a response generated by the voice mail system, said response having embedded media parameters identifying the voice mail system; and
- (d) terminate said response and bridge all media between the source telephone and the target telephone in response to an accept call instruction received from the target telephone.

25 13. The voice mail system according to claim 12, being further adapted to:

- (e) direct a prompt to the source telephone to allow the source telephone to hear the voice message upon termination of a voice message directed from the source telephone.

14. A server for providing a service between a source telephone and a target telephone having access to the server, said server being adapted to:

- (a) receive an unanswered call directed to the target telephone, said call having embedded therein an address of the target telephone, an address of the source telephone, and an address of the server;
- (b) establish an outgoing call to the target telephone;

- (c) establish an outgoing call to a Value Added System and forward all call parameters that are needed by the Value Added System in order to process the call properly;
 - 5 (d) convey to the source telephone a response generated by the Value Added System, said response having embedded media parameters identifying the server; and
 - (e) terminate said response and re-establish connection to both the source telephone and the target telephone in response to an accept call instruction received from the target telephone.
- 10 15. The server according to claim 14, wherein the Value Added System is voice mail system and the server is a screening server for screening calls directed to the voice mail system.